

limited information that is currently available, and demonstrate that many estimates for economic potential are based on seriously deficient data. In the final two chapters the authors discuss in detail the history and political geography of Antarctica. They are primarily concerned with background to national claims, and events leading up to the Antarctic Treaty, its implementation, and the role of the treaty consultative meetings.

The opening chapter on the physical environment of the Antarctic is probably the most seriously deficient section of the book for it contains numerous and fundamental errors, and often draws on material that is out-dated (two-thirds of the references are pre-1965). For example, the quoted maximum thickness of the ice sheet, 4 800 m (p 12) is based upon gravity measurements which, over seven years ago, were shown to be inaccurate by +10 per cent. Lambert Glacier is called a valley glacier rather than an outlet glacier, and the authors consider 'ablation' as evaporation only (p 18). Some of the worst misconceptions occur in dealing with glacial geologic history of Antarctica. The start of the last global ice age is given (p 18) as 1.8 Ma BP—the beginning of the Quaternary. In the next paragraph we are told that the Antarctic ice sheet dates well before the Quaternary. In fact, most glaciologists consider the last ice age began 20 to 25 Ma BP. We are also told that the very spectacular and much investigated dry valleys in McMurdo Sound were deglaciated around 50 ka BP (p 22)—towards the peak of the last glacial advance. Almost a decade ago, detailed volcanic sedimentological evidence from these valleys demonstrated that they have been ice-free for a minimum of 4.2 Ma.

Despite these shortcomings the book is well-written and should be essential reading for those who wish to keep abreast of current economic and political developments in Antarctica. Its modest cost makes the book most attractive.

ELEPHANT ISLAND

[Review by Peter D. Clarkson* of Chris Furse's *Elephant Island: an Antarctic expedition*, Shrewsbury, Anthony Nelson Limited, 1979, 256 p, illus. £8.50.]

Following his first experience of Antarctica with Malcolm Burley's 1970–71 Joint Services Expedition to Elephant Island, Chris Furse was determined to return as leader of his own expedition to the Elephant Island group, part of the South Shetland Islands.

The book is the official expedition narrative and it necessarily opens with the obligatory chapters on conception, planning and all the trials and tribulations experienced by every expedition leader before departure. The proposed use of canoes was viewed with concern by the Antarctic exploration 'establishment' in Britain but, when the more risky inter-island voyages were eliminated, the expedition was eventually 'endorsed' both as an adventure and as a scientific venture. The novelty of the expedition was canoeing around and between the islands—a more versatile mode of transport and considerably cheaper than the conventional rubber inflatable boats. Canoes in polar waters are not new, Eskimos have used kayaks for centuries, but this is a first for Antarctica, unless Uite-Rangiora really did reach the frozen ocean in the canoe *Te-Ivi-o-Atea* about 650 AD, as told in Rarotongan legends.

Once in Antarctica aboard HMS *Endurance*, the story is told in diary form. The author writes well of his own party on O'Brien, Eadie, Aspland and Gibbs islands in what is the largest and most exciting section of the book. The comparable section on the Clarence Island party written by John Highton, the deputy leader, is shorter and less inspired, although there is still plenty of adventure. The final section, where both parties come together on Elephant Island, is not written with quite the same flair as the author's earlier part. Throughout the story the main events take place on the islands, whether in exploration, climbing or in scientific endeavour; but it is always the sea, the canoe journeys and the weather which provide the greatest excitement.

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The scientific aims of the expedition were varied and ambitious. The results are reproduced in the appendices, and they show a modest but worthwhile contribution to scientific knowledge of an area which would not normally be examined, on account of the difficult access. The other appendices include biographical sketches of the expedition members, an account of the history of the area, and a useful equipment and food report, which comments constructively on the effectiveness of the equipment.

The main criticism of the book is the poor quality of the maps, which are small and omit many of the unofficial place-names used in the text. However, on the credit side, the book is very well illustrated with many monochrome and colour photographs, and some fine bird sketches by the author. The story is well told with tense and exciting moments, and is recommended to both real and armchair explorers. It also demonstrates that there is still a place for small expeditions to make a contribution to exploration and science.

IN BRIEF

OUR INUKSHUK

The Scott Polar Research Institute has acquired an attractive new decorative artefact to add to those that already adorn the outside of its building in Cambridge. The new acquisition is an inukshuk—a cairn built in the shape of a man—from Baffin Island. It is a fine example of a construction that has been used by the Inuit of the Canadian Arctic for many hundreds of years, mainly as an aid to hunting caribou. Cairns like this one were built at regular intervals on the tops of hills overlooking caribou migration trails, adding to the apparent manpower of the hunting group and so helping the Inuit to guide the caribou towards a selected lake or river site where they became easy targets for the hunters.

This particular inukshuk, made from a pink-hued local granite, was collected in the 1960s by the late Mr Charles Gimpel, a London art dealer who had a particular interest in the art of the Inuit and whose generous gifts of modern sculptures and stonecut prints have greatly enriched the Institute's own collection of northern native works of art. Charles Gimpel died in 1973, and his family have now presented the inukshuk to the Institute in his memory.

We believe that this inukshuk is the first, and perhaps the only example of its kind to have been brought to Europe, but we shall be glad to hear from any reader who knows otherwise.

YAKS FOR THE CANADIAN ARCTIC

According to the *Edmonton Journal* of 5 September 1979, the settlement of Fort Simpson in the Northwest Territories is considering plans to release twelve yaks into the area in the near future. The mayor of Fort Simpson believes that these hardy animals could supply meat, milk and jobs to local residents. Although it will not be necessary to build barns for the animals, a few shelters may be constructed to help protect this new investment. Already ten local men have nearly completed fencing off a large area in the village pasture, and there should be enough local hay to feed the animals during the winter. In addition to supplying meat, which is said to taste like beef, the yak hair could be used by local weavers. But the village has even bigger ambitions; the possibility of breeding northern animals such as Chinese deer and Mongolian camels for sale locally and overseas is also under discussion.

NAHANNI NATIONAL PARK

What has northern Canada's Nahanni National Park in common with the Great Pyramids of Egypt, the Grand Canyon and the Galápagos Islands? The answer, for those who have not already guessed, is that the United Nations has designated them all as areas of outstanding universal value